

MAR 23 1962

Dulles Lapse in Briefing JFK May Have Tipped Election

Ex CIA Chief Unwittingly Gave Kennedy An Issue That Nixon Couldn't Touch

By TED LEWIS

Chicago Tribune Press Service

WASHINGTON, March 23 —

The amazing disclosure that former CIA Chief Allen Dulles held back during the 1960 Presidential campaign from briefing John F. Kennedy fully about the Cuban crisis deserves more examination than the usual teapott-tempest variety of post-election revelations.

Because Mr. Kennedy was kept ignorant before his election of the Eisenhower-Nixon plans for mounting an anti-Castro invasion, it now turns out paradoxically that the Democratic nominee benefited from a phenomenally lucky political break. But for it, he could well have been defeated, and Mr. Nixon would now be in the White House.

Any fair analysis of the election impact of Mr. Dulles' failure to tell Mr. Kennedy all about Cuba must center on the question as to whether there was significant political mileage for Mr. Kennedy in the Castro issue.

Ignorant of Invasion Plans

Mr. Nixon has agreed there was. In his book, "Six Crises," he relates how he was frustrated and unable to go after Mr. Kennedy with full steam and vitriol on the issue in the vital last two weeks of the campaign.

The reason: He was privy to the invasion plans and thought Mr. Kennedy was, too, but was honor-bound to keep the information under wraps.

But Mr. Kennedy was happily ignorant in October 1960 of the invasion preparations. Any doubt that this has now been reached a climax, would have been forced to soft-pedal the Cuban issue. He would have known better.

A Vote-Winning Response

Instead, it was an issue that Mr. Kennedy, out of ignorance, made one of his most effective. He was able flatly to charge that Gen. Eisenhower and Mr. Nixon had had a do-nothing policy toward Red Cuba. He sounded an alarm over communism having a foothold 90 miles from our shores.

he would do something about it, not just stand still.

It was a vote-producing response to the Kennedy camp. It disturbed Mr. Nixon, who knew he had the answer that would cut his opponent down to size—even win the election. But silence had been imposed upon him, and he was a patriot.

Why did Mr. Dulles hold out on Mr. Kennedy and give him the opportunity to win votes and nail down the election?

Same Procedure in '56

It is necessary to go back to 1952 when President Truman, in a smart gesture, ordered that CIA briefings on the global situation be given to both White House candidates, Adlai E. Stevenson and Gen. Eisenhower.

Gen. Eisenhower followed the same procedure in 1956. He believed it was best for the nation for Mr. Stevenson to be constantly updated on all cold war matters so he could discuss foreign policy on a knowledgeable basis.

As Mr. Dulles briefed Mr. Stevenson in 1952, so he was ordered to brief Mr. Kennedy in 1960. But, as he said in a statement Tuesday: "My briefings were intelligence briefings on the world situation. They did not cover our own Government's plans or programs for action, overt to covert."

Saw It as Issue of Policy

This was the same procedure, it has now been learned, that was followed in 1952 and 1956. But in those two Presidential years there was no cloak-and-dagger program under way on any scale that could develop to see if Mr. Dulles had told Mr. Kennedy what was going on. And if not, wouldn't it have been smart for Gen. Eisenhower to have briefed him, particularly in view of the fix Mr. Nixon was in on the Cuban issue?

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